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# War in the Air



Beaughters refuelling and rearming on an advanced landing ground in the Libyan Desert.

## Hitler Drops the Pilot : The Agile Buffalo : Pressing on in Libya : The Malta A.A. Barrage

**A** PART from fighting of special and perhaps personal interest to British readers, the great news of the moment is the assumption of the supreme command of the German Army by Adolf Hitler himself, and the dismissal of the former Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch. This action by the Führer is a confession that the recent backward movement of the Germans in Russia is no mere straightening of the line "according to plan," but a defeat on a major scale. It would be hard to say at the moment which is of the greater strategic importance to the cause of the Allies, the failure of the Germans to win the Battle of the Atlantic or the German defeat in Russia.

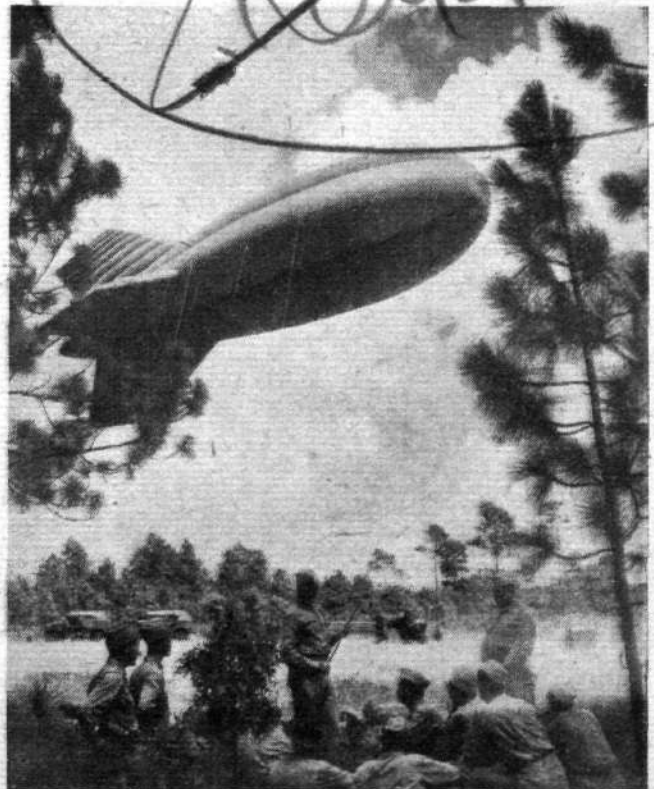
Hitherto it must be admitted that von Brauchitsch has been a most successful, perhaps a brilliant, commander. All the land campaigns under his direction have been carried through like a book, as the saying is. In the invasion of Russia he had the great advantage of initial surprise, for Hitler did not declare war and the Germans started their invasion before the Russians were ready. An immense area of Poland and Russia has been occupied by the invaders, and, though the doggedness of the Russian resistance and the equipment and fighting power of the Red Air Fleet came as surprises to the Germans, the latter continued to advance and to hold the initiative. It may well be found that the true cause of the recent turn of

the tide was Hitler's insistence that Moscow must be taken before Christmas, cost what it might in men and material. An important contributory cause seems to have been the changes in the Russian army group commands at just the right time, for Marshal Timoshenko has certainly been a brilliant success in the south—that very critical front, behind which lie supplies of oil.

Whatever the cause, there is no doubt that in October the Germans mustered for a great advance. One rumour said that the *Luftwaffe* had concentrated no less than 5,000 aircraft to help the German armies. Then the tide turned, and the Russians were able to seize the initiative all along the line, and it has been stated that their aircraft outnumbered those of the Germans on many sections. Any psychologist who has made a study of the ways of dictators would probably have prophesied that after such a debacle Hitler

would dismiss his Commander-in-Chief—and so it has happened.

It would greatly enhance the Christmas cheer in the United Kingdom if we could all feel certain that Adolf Hitler intended personally to direct the movements of his armies. He is a brilliant villain in many ways, but there is no reason to suppose that he is capable of acting as a General. His



**FOR JAP DIVE-BOMBERS : U.S. Barrage balloons flown at Army exercises.**